



DUTCHESS TOURISM

HUDSON VALLEY REGION NEW YORK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARY KAY VRBA TO RETIRE FROM DUTCHESS TOURISM

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY– Dutchess Tourism, Inc. (DTI) today announced that Mary Kay Vrba, the organization’s President and CEO, has decided to retire effective July 20, 2020. DTI’s Board of Directors will conduct a transition and search process for a new, permanent President/CEO in accordance with their Succession Plan.

Vrba has contributed over 25 years of experience to DTI, serving most recently as Executive Director for eight years preceding her current position. Before her tenure at DTI, she held positions at Hudson River Valley Association, Crossroads International and Dutchess County Parks, Recreation and Conservation – a 40-year career devoted to local tourism.

Under Vrba’s leadership, Dutchess County’s vibrant tourism industry has grown exponentially, with more than 4.5 million visitors annually, spending over \$640 million and supporting more than 11,000 local jobs. DTI has played a pivotal role in that growth and Vrba has led numerous initiatives and has achieved many successes including:

- Launch of the organization’s first website in 1995 – today’s Dutchess Tourism website is visited by over one million visitors,
- Development of new events, programs and tours which increase county visitation,
- Completion of visitor profile studies, a lodging analysis and DestinationNEXT local leaders’ study to inform strategic marketing plans,
- Production of an-award winning VR (virtual reality) video – the first by any tourism organization in the region, placing Dutchess Tourism at the forefront of international marketing efforts,
- Travel with I LOVE NEW YORK to the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Australia and China, expanding Dutchess County’s international market.

In 2014, Vrba led the organization’s transition from an arm of the Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation to an independent 501c6 non-profit organization with a 25-member Board of Directors. Since then, the organization has grown by doubling the number of full-time employees and now provides more than 600 tourism-related entities in Dutchess County with business, marketing, education and other support. In 2017, under Vrba’s leadership, DTI became one of less than 200 destination marketing organizations world-wide to receive accreditation from Destinations International.

Vrba said “Working in Dutchess County and with Dutchess Tourism is the best job available. The support from County Executive Molinaro and the County Legislature chaired by Gregg Pulver, enables our dynamic team to tell the Dutchess County story and put us on the map. There comes a time in everyone’s career where it is time to move on to the next adventure, and that time for me is now.”

Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro said, “Throughout her tenure at Dutchess Tourism, Mary Kay Vrba has been a master of telling the story of Dutchess County, sharing with visitors from around the world that which make us

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such a unique and desirable destination. Mary Kay has raised our county's profile throughout the national and international travel markets, becoming a respected industry leader, revered for her knowledge, experience and professionalism. More than simply an advocate for what makes Dutchess truly distinct, Mary Kay has led the charge for our local tourism industry, an economic engine that adds more than \$600 million in annual visitor spending and employs thousands of our residents. I have been honored to call Mary Kay a colleague. Admittedly, though, I have genuine mixed emotions as she is among my dearest and trusted friends, a grounded and forthright advisor and an incomparable and decent woman. While I am saddened to see her step down, I wish her every happiness as she turns the page and writes the next chapter of her story – let there be no mistake she has made an immeasurable and indelible mark in the story of Dutchess.”

Judy D'Alessandro, Dutchess Tourism Inc.'s Board Chair, added her sentiment: “Everyone knows the joy and passion Mary Kay brings to promoting Dutchess County's tourism businesses and attractions to the world. What they might not know is how she works tirelessly behind the scenes to bring diverse groups of people together to enhance the quality of life we all enjoy.”

Vrba's accolades include being named among Hudson Valley Women in Business by *Hudson Valley Magazine*, Distinguished Alumnae by the Dutchess County Regional Chamber Foundation's Leadership Dutchess program, Outstanding Woman in Destination Management/Marketing by Women in Travel & Tourism, International, Power Women Honoree by *Moves Magazine*, recipient of the Henry Award in Tourism from Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, recipient of the Distinguished Alumnae Award from College of St. Mary, recipient of the Peggy Martinko Trailblazer Award from the ARC of Dutchess, and more. Vrba has served on boards and committees for Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce, New York State Travel Industry (formerly New York State Tourism Promotion Agency Council), US Travel Association and Destinations International.

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About Dutchess Tourism

Dutchess Tourism, Inc. is the officially designated destination marketing organization for Dutchess County and is accredited by the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) of Destinations International. It is an independent 501c6 non-profit organization that works to bring tourism dollars to area businesses by marketing and promoting the assets of Dutchess County to the nation and the world. The office is located at 3 Neptune Road in the Town of Poughkeepsie with 17 Tourist Information Centers located around Dutchess County. The website is www.DutchessTourism.com and they can be reached at 845-463-4000. Dutchess Tourism, Inc. is partially funded by monies received from the County of Dutchess.

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